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ABSTRACT

After 11 years of existence, the Vocational Education Advisory Council movement should be assessed and some major issues they must address in the future should be considered. The 1968 Amendments and the 1976 legislation provided for the establishment of national, state, and local advisory councils. They were intended to serve as instruments to bridge the gap between education and work and as advisors and independent evaluators of vocational education programs. Vocational education has grown in both quantity and quality over the past 12 years, and much of that growth can be attributed to work of the advisory councils. Their effectiveness is due to their substantial level of competence, credibility, visibility, effective relationship with agencies concerned with vocational training, and effectiveness in planning and evaluation. The future of advisory councils will be determined by their impact on these major issues facing vocational education: (1) the federal government's role in vocational education, (2) the need for a national policy in vocational education, (3) use of federal funds, (4) administration of vocational education, (5) block grants for vocational education, (6) state plans, (7) advisory councils, and (8) a funding priority for public education. (YLB)

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ADVISORY COUNCILS ON VOCATIONAL EDUCATION--RETROSPECT AND PROSPECT*

I am both honored and pleased to appear on the program of this joint NACVE/SACVE meeting. I am honored because I personally feel a very close identification with this group, having been the Chairman or the Executive Director of the Virginia Council since its inception and if my memory serves me correctly, I have attended all of the joint NACVE/SACVE meetings that have been held, the first one being in Washington, D.C., on November 1, 1969.

I am pleased to appear on this program because of the opportunity it gives me to share some ideas with you on the Advisory Council movement in this country.

In addressing the topic assigned to me, and in keeping with the theme of this joint meeting, I believe retrospect means to look back at, or surveying the past, and prospect means to look forward. After 11 years of existence, I think it is tremendously important that we make an assessment of our labors to date and take a look at some of the major issues that Councils must address as we move into the future.

Let me begin my remarks by placing the Vocational Education Advisory Council movement in perspective.

Since the earliest days of our Nation, public education has involved and absorbed the interest and attention of citizens and citizen groups. No other field of public service has had as much impact on so many people over as long a period of their lives. Therefore, it seems only logical that Congress

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*Remarks made by Dr. Rufus W. Beamer, Executive Director, Virginia State Advisory Council on Vocational Education, to the Joint NACVE/SACVE Meeting, Washington, D.C., June 20, 1981.

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would establish an instrumentality for concerned, informed, and interested citizens to have a voice in the development of the educational system of our country by way of the National, State, and local Advisory Councils on Vocational Education. The 1968 Amendments established two major benchmarks in the evolution of Advisory Councils. First, it provided for a National Advisory Council on Vocational Education, and second, it mandated the creation of State Advisory Councils as a condition for the states' receiving funds. The success of these two levels of Advisory Councils led to the 1976 legislation that established local Advisory Councils.

The intent of Congress with respect to Advisory Councils was summed up in a letter of April 30, 1973 to the Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare from Congressman Albert Quie, William Steiger, and Lloyd Meeds:

> We strongly believe that independent lay advisory councils, at both the National and State levels, in using the views and perspectives of business, labor, and the general public into the educational process, are especially important in the area of vocational education. They provide advice to the educational administrators and to Congress which cannot be furnished by professional educators.

Congress clearly intended that Advisory Councils serve as an instrumentality for bridging the gap between the world of education and the world of work. Also, to serve as advisors and independent evaluators of vocational education programs at the National, State, and local levels.

How well have the Advisory Councils been serving this mission given to them by the Congress? Some clue to their performance can be ascertained by taking a look at the type and variety of issues that the Councils have been addressing in their reports. In that regard, let me share with you a few of the major recommendations made by the Councils in their first annual evaluation reports.

1. The Councils recommended strongly that Boards of Education should assume a leadership role in planning and activating programs of in-service training for board members, administrators, supervisors, guidance and counseling personnel, at all levels of education--elementary, secondary, and postsecondary--for the purpose of developing an understanding and agreement upon an appropriate philosophy of education to meet the needs of today and future years. Evidences such as the following were cited as justifying the recommendation: The current disproportionate emphasis upon college-prep, the need to improve the image of vocational education, the inadequate counseling services, the tendency to sometimes use vocational programs as a "dumping ground," and the tendency to counsel all "bright" students into traditional four-year colleges and universities. There are emphatic evidences that too many people (parents, board members, administrators, guidance staff, teachers, and students) still reveal the belief that vocational education requires primarily a "strong back" and that "academic talent" would be wasted in vocational programs.

2. Most of the Council reports included a recommendation with respect to guidance and counseling services. In general the recommendation said that the State Board of Education should do whatever is required to bring about a major change in the present system of selecting, educating and training counselors at all levels.

3. The Councils (all of them) recommended a monumental expansion and strengthening of vocational education curriculums. They said that programs should be planned for meeting the occupational needs of all persons of all ages and in all life careers.

4. Financing vocational education was dealt with by most of the Councils.

The majority of the state councils recommended that the State Board of Education should appeal to and insist that the legislature appropriate more funds for vocational education and establish the highest priority for the expansion, change and improvement in vocational education.

5. Councils made recommendations to the boards of education that they take aggressive leadership action to precipitate massive involvement of business, industry, agriculture, labor, and others including public school officials, to improve and extend vocational education. There exists today a very serious lack of communication between the public communities and the professional educators in all levels of education. This has resulted in the lack of urgently needed vocational education, and much dull and nonsensical instruction.

6. The councils recommended greater attention to placement and follow-up of students. They believed that every secondary school should be an employment agency. The councils also indicated that steps should be taken to design and implement a plan for systematic follow-up of students leaving schools and community colleges in the state.

7. The councils voiced grave concern about the fragmentation and proliferation of manpower training programs.

8. Most of the councils recommended an increased emphasis on vocational education for the handicapped and the disadvantaged.

9. Many Councils recommended to their boards a higher priority for vocational education in the overall education budget.

10. The councils took note of the many strengths in present and developing programs of vocational education. They were extremely pleased with the fact that national enrollments in vocational education programs were on the increase and would probably reach 14 million by 1975.

The councils made many other recommendations. Generally they had to do with such facets of vocational education as the following:

a. The expansion and strengthening of teacher education programs.

b. The establishment of data collecting systems adequate to serve current and recurring needs of the various vocational agencies for planning, programming, evaluating, and reports.

c. Increased citizen involvement.

d. Increased attention to research and evaluation activities.

e. Articulation of vocational programs and services among and between institutions providing programs and services.

f. Modification and simplification of State plans for vocational education.

In reviewing the more recent annual evaluation reports of the State Advisory Councils, I think one would readily conclude that the Councils have been dealing with the major issues in vocational education in this country on a continuing basis. They have indeed been in the forefront and cutting edge of this growing component of public education.

The evidence is clear. Vocational education has grown in both quantity and quality over the past 12 years, and I submit to you that much of that growth can be attributed to work of the Advisory Councils on Vocational Education. The issues they have addressed, the recommendations they have made, and the implementation of those recommendations by the appropriate administrative boards have had a major influence on this growth.

Let me capsule for you why I think the Advisory Councils have been effective in carrying out the mission given to them by the Congress.

1. They have developed over their 12 years of existence a substantial level of competence.

2. They have developed credibility with the boards they are mandated to advise.

3. They have developed their own visibility, and as advocates of vocational education and spokespersons for vocational education, they have given vocational education a new legitimacy, a new acceptance, a new maturity, and an improved image.

4. They have developed an effective relationship with CETA and other agencies interested in and concerned with vocational training.

5. They have been effective in their planning and evaluation responsibilities.

6. They have performed their duties and responsibilities without becoming bureaucratic.

Much of the credit for the success of the Advisory Councils should go to the U.S. Congress. In the first place the Congress was wise and foresighted in the way it structured the Councils--making them independent of other agencies and groups, setting up criteria for membership that gave a balanced representation, indicating the duties and responsibilities to be performed, providing a budget for operating the Council, and placing the Council at the top level of governmental decision-making. In the second place Congress has been supportive of the Councils. At different times it has passed corrective legislation to strengthen the Councils. However, major credit for the success of the Council movement belongs to the thousands of dedicated, competent individuals who have served on these Councils and who have given of their time and talent to the work of the Councils.

The Councils have utilized a variety of strategies in developing their competence, or professionalism, but there is one activity in the in-service training of Council members and staff that I want to highlight. Shortly after

the State and National Advisory Councils were created, it was agreed that these Councils should work toward cooperative efforts in carrying out their tasks. It was in this context that joint meetings of National and State Councils were planned to discuss problems of mutual concern and areas of joint action. These meetings have been extremely helpful to the work of both the National and State Councils. The leadership given to the State Councils by the National Council has been of great value in the growth and development of the State Councils, and likewise, the leadership given to the local Councils by State Councils has been very helpful in their development.

Now, let us move from this brief retrospective look at Advisory Councils to a perception of what the future may hold for them. I think it was the late Justice Holmes who said that the great thing in the world is not "so much where we stand, as in what direction we are headed." What the future holds for them of course depends on how they impact on the major issues facing vocational education in this country today and specifically in the year of 1981. This may be the most crucial year in the history of vocational education in this country and we have had some crucial years in the past.

In the next few minutes, I would like to identify and comment briefly on several issues that I think will have a major impact on vocational education in this country in the months and years ahead.

The issues I have identified to discuss with you are:

1. The Federal Government's role in vocational education.
2. The need for a national policy in vocational education.
3. Use of federal funds.
4. Administration of vocational education.

5. Block grants for vocational education.

6. State plans.

7. Advisory councils.

8. A funding priority for public education.

You will note that many of these topics, or issues, are currently being discussed as issues pertinent to the re-authorization of the current Vocational Education Act which expires in 1982.

The Federal Government's Role

I think the role of the Federal Government is to assist the states in bringing vocational education to its full potential. Bringing vocational education to its full potential (or meeting the needs of vocational education for the people of this country) is an imperative for the Nation. It is also an imperative to each of the states which collectively constitute the Nation. Even though, over the past decade there has been a phenomenal growth of educational opportunity in many areas of vocational-technical preparation at both the secondary and postsecondary schools and colleges in the Nation, there remains a wide disparity between the potential needs for vocational education and the achievement of that potential. Vocational education is needed in our country today more than at any time in our history. A major challenge to the United States is the development of a skilled work force that can successfully compete with the work forces of other highly industrialized countries around the world. It is imperative that this country increase the productivity of its work force, bring inflation under control, solve the problem of unemployment, and strengthen its defense posture. Vocational education by its very nature plays a vital role, directly or indirectly in each of these imperatives. Congress enacted the Smith-Hughes Act of 1917 because of vocational education's importance to the country. I submit to you that the impact of

science and technology on the culture of this country over the past 60 years makes vocational education more important to this Nation in 1981 than it was in 1917. I believe logic, facts, and good national policy all suggest a need for the Federal Government to give more attention to vocational education now and in the years ahead rather than less. I perceive vocational education as a National Priority, and if this priority is to be realized, the Federal Government's role, both in terms of leadership and funding, should be expanded rather than diminished as is being expressed in certain Washington circles.

The Need for a National Policy

In 1976, Marvin Feldman[1], a member of NACVE, addressed a joint meeting of NACVE, SACVE, and the National Association of State Directors of Vocational Education in Houston, Texas, on the topic: Toward a National Policy for Vocational Education. He cited figures to indicate vocational education is becoming the dominant mode of education in America; that vocational education is becoming the Nation's most basic industry. He indicated our growth has been growth largely without design--growth outside the framework of policy. He said that we have been guided by a very general--and very appropriate--imperative to provide more and more work relevant education to more and more students. And as a result, while we have a growing number of programs we have no National policy for vocational education. There are, he said, indications everywhere that vocational education is outgrowing its original rationale and needs to rethink its mission.

Somewhere along the way Feldman's urgent cry for a National policy got stalled because it is now 1981, and we are indeed without an overall National

[1]Marvin Feldman, Remarks, Joint Meeting of NACVE/SACVE, and the National Association of State Directors o Vocational Education, Houston, Texas, December 5, 1976.

policy. We need one and we are probably paying a price for not having one. Not only do we need a National policy, we need state policies to support and mesh with the National policy. There should be no inconsistency of purpose or lack of congruence between these two entities of government so far as vocational education is concerned.

Use of Federal Funds

To a large extent, the answer to the use of Federal funds depends on the policy issue--what should be the role of the Federal Government relative to the state and local governments? Since I believe that National priorities are congruent with state priorities, the following represent my priority ranking for the use of Federal funds:

1. Access for general population.
2. Acccess for needy population groups.
3. Innovation, demonstration, dissemination, emerging programs, and research and development.
4. Quality programs.
5. Incentives to private industry.
6. Lifelong learning.
7. Coordination and integration with other Federal programs.
8. Economically depressed areas.

I believe Federal funds should be used to assist the state and local governments develop quality vocational programs that will meet the needs of the total population (young people and adults) of a community. Using Federal funds only for targeted populations would over time detract from the concept that vocational education is relevant education for all students--for the college bound, the non-college bound, and the adult. Vocational education has been plagued for too long by the attitude

that it is for somebody else's youngster when it is actually for everybody's youngster. What we need in our communities are quality vocational programs that will produce a highly competent product, and to have these types of programs require the pooling of Federal, state, and local resources.

Too many people (Congressmen, Senators, Administration representatives in the Department of Education) are saying since state and local funds overmatch federal support for vocational education ten or eleven dollars to one that the federal dollar has little or no impact. You might conclude this by looking solely at the source of dollars expended, but state and local funds have grown because of federal support and federal initiative. Major funding advancements at the state and local levels in many states can be directly attributed to federal legislative appropriations, and I submit the retrenchment of federal aid will impact negatively on state and local financial support for vocational education.

In reading several position papers on the re-authorization of the VEA, I observe recommendations or suggestions that no Federal funds be used to maintain on-going programs. My experience in vocational education leads me to a different conclusion. I believe Federal funds, in limited amounts, can be justified in the funding of on-going programs. Some Federal funds for maintenance may make the difference in having a program and not having a program.

Block Grants

The block grant concept of sending Federal monies to the states is apparently a component of the current administration's new Federalism. The proponents of the block grant procedure argue that it lessens Federal influence on the states and localities; that it would remove "the heavy hand of the Federal Government"

and would enable the states and localities to decide how they would use Federal funds. Of course, the concept of block grants is not new. It has been around for a long time.

The important thing here isn't the block grant concept per se. The important thing is how the block grant concept would be administered. For example, it would be an absolute disaster to include funds for vocational education in block grants to the states for education.

I believe a wise Congress will not and should not turn funds over to the states without some guidance as to the use of the funds and provisions that would require the states to account for the use of the funds. I would also hope that Congress would stipulate that Federal funds "supplement rather than supplant" local or state funds for vocational education.

Administration of Vocational Education (Governance)

At the Federal and state levels there exist a variety of administrative structures to govern vocational education. In many of the states the structure is a "hodgepodge", highly fragmented and inefficient. The following problems are associated with the governance structure in most states.

1. They fail to give appropriate attention and priorities to matters pertaining to establishing and implementing vocational education needed by the people of the state.

2. They do not work effectively as the sole state agency in carrying out the mandates of Federal legislation.

3. They do not provide for appropriate articulation between the secondary schools and the postsecondary institutions.

4. They do not respond to the needs of local school divisions and the community colleges.

5. Their structure does not allow the vocational staff, especially the director or chief administrator to articulate effectively and forcefully the needs, missions, and priorities of vocational education at the highest levels of decisionmaking.

Perhaps now is the time to explore the possibility of establishing a single Federal agency to administer all Federal programs, especially since the present administration does not want to retain the newly created Department of Education.

Likewise, perhaps now is the time to establish a single state agency (sole state agency) which would be governed by a policy board established by the state legislature. The board should include representation from the existing state educational agencies responsible for secondary, adult, and community college programs, and include representatives from business, labor, agriculture, and the general public. The board should have a staff to support their main functions. My observations and experience in public education have caused me to reluctantly conclude that we will never be able to develop the vocational education that the public has expressed it needs and wants under our current governance structures. Fragmented responsibilities, coordination, and linkages are not the way to go.

State Plans

In the first Annual Evaluation Reports submitted by the SACVEs, I don't think there was a single SACVE report that didn't include recommendations for the improvement of state plans. The SACVEs were critical of the quality of the plans; they were critical of the procedures followed by the departments of education in the preparation of the plans; they labeled the plans as compliance documents rather than planning documents. In responding to all this criticism the 1976 Amendments added new provisions in an attempt to improve

the planning process, the quality of the content of the plan, and accountability. I think state plans and state planning have improved. They are much better than they were when the Advisory Councils began their work but we still have a long way to go in bringing our state plans to a level that would be acceptable.

Advisory Councils

As I have previously indicated in my remarks, Advisory Councils play a unique role in vocational education, particularly in the business/labor/education linkage. They have had without question a very positive influence on the growth and development of vocational education over the past several years. The evidence is overwhelming in support of their being continued in the re-authorized legislation. I have been taught and I believe in the concept that public education is of, by and for the public. Advisory Councils represent the best vehicle I know for implementing this concept.

A Funding Priority for Public Education

"Manpower and Vocational Education Weekly"[2] in its May 21, 1981 issue includes an article entitled: "Training More Important Than College as Productivity Booster, CBO Says." Let me read to you a couple of quotes from this article:

> "In a recent analysis of productivity improvement options, CBO said, 'To some extent current federal policy may overemphasize higher education compared with investments in training or secondary education.' Increased federal spending on higher education 'does not appear to be a very effective way of increasing productivity,' said CBO."
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> "Money now spent to subsidize student loans and grants, for example, 'might, from the standpoint of economic growth, be better employed elsewhere,' such as job training, secondary school improvements, and 'selected areas' of postsecondary education, CBO said."

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[2]"Manpower and Vocational Education Weekly," May 21, 1981, p. 9.

These statements made by the Congressional Budget Office took on meaning to me because of the study the Virginia State Advisory Council had made on: Who Pays for Public Education in Virginia?3 A significant finding of this study was that 29 percent of the cost of education in Virginia--higher education as well as elementary and secondary education--is borne by households whose heads have less than a high school education. Twenty-five percent of the cost of education in Virginia is borne by households whose heads have graduated from high school but never attended college. Another 15 percent of the cost of education in Virginia is borne by households whose heads have attended college for less than four years. Combining these figures, one concludes that 69 percent of the cost of education in Virginia is borne by households whose heads have not graduated from college.

I believe these findings give support to the statements made by the Congressional Budget Office on increasing productivity. It seems clear to me that a top priority should be given to the education of this group of people who pays 69 percent of the cost of public education not only because it would be the right thing to do, but because of social, economic, and political benefits to our Nation as well.

In bringing my remarks to a close on "Advisory Councils: Retrospect and Prospect" I would like to capsule just a few thoughts.

The Advisory Councils on Vocational Education have served this country well. They will continue to serve this country well through promoting work relevant education. Their work will be characterized by (1) conviction--a belief in

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3"Who Pays for Public Education in Virginia" by T. Nicolaus Tideman, Research Associate, Center for Study of Public Choice, VPI&SU, Blacksburg, VA, July, 1977.

vocational education; (2) commitment--a determination to make vocational education a reality; (3) concern--a desire to make it better through on-going study and evaluation; (4) courage--a willingness to recommend changes and new approaches when they appear to be warranted even though they might not always enjoy popularity.

In the ultimate the Advisory Council's strength is its independence. It must be carefully guarded.